DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 166 665 CS 004 660

AUTHOR Reed, Kathleen
TITLE An Investigation of the Effect of Sustained Silent Reading on Reading Comprehension Skills and Attitude toward Reading of Urban Secondary School Students.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Reading Conference (28th, St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, November 30-December 2, 1978) ; Best copy available

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS High School Students; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Research; Secondary Education; Silent Reading; *Student Attitudes; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Reading Attitudes; *Sustained Silent Reading

ABSTRACT

Students in 61 English classes at an urban high school participated in an investigation of the effects of sustained silent reading (SSR) on their reading comprehension skills and on their atttiudes toward reading. SSR calls for a systematic structured time in school for students to read books of their choosing without being tested when the reading is completed. The students' reading comprehension was measured by a standardized reading achievement test and their attitudes toward reading by an attitude inventory. They were then randomly assigned to either an experimental (SSR) treatment or to a control treatment. The SSR treatment consisted of four days of traditional classroom procedures and one day of SSR each week. The control treatment consisted of five days weekly of traditional classroom procedures. At the end of the five-and-a-half-month study, the students were again tested. The results showed that there was no statistically significant relationship between treatment and either reading comprehension or attitude toward reading. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED166665

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Dr. Kathleen Reed
Assistant Professor
Department of Education
Stonehill College
North Easton, MA 02356

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kathleen Reed

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECT OF SUSTAINED SILENT READING ON READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS AND ATTITUDE TOWARD READING OF URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Kathleen Reed
Stonehill College
North Easton, MA

On any analysis of reading achievement, it has been found that there is a correlation between membership in certain groups and the degree of success that students have in learning to read. As a whole students from urban schools not only read less well than their sub-urban or rural counterparts, but they read less often (Johnson, 1973). Therefore, it would seem that one of the greatest areas of need for improved reading instructional procedures is in schools located in urban areas. School personnel involved with reading instruction in urban schools need help in finding theoretically sound instructional procedures that can be easily translated into classroom practice in today's schools.

Few reading educators would argue against systematic reading instruction. However, what many suggest is that reading instruction

CS004660

is often fragmented into isolated skill practice with little opportunity for real life reading experiences (Goodman & Burke, 1972; Hunt, 1973; Vacca & Johns, 1976). If a student practices reading skills in bits and snatches of workbooks and worksheets and never has the opportunity to apply the skills in the silent reading of a book or story of his/her own choosing, we cannot be assured that the student will ever become a skillful, voluntary reader.

The practice of allowing students to self-select books and to read them for long uninterrupted periods of time in school was formally titled Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading (USSR) by Hunt, (1970) and subsequently shortened to Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) by McCracken (1971). Basically such a procedure calls for systematic, structured time in school for students to read books that they want to read without being held responsible for comprehension questions or book reports once the reading is completed. Increasing numbers of middle schools, junior high schools and secondary schools are incorporating periods of SSR into their instructional programs (Hofmann, 1978; McCracken, 1971; Oliver, 1970; Petre, 1971). Unfortunately there has been a significant lack of controlled research to investigate the effect that SSR has on secondary school students reading comprehension skills and attitudes toward reading. In addition, there has been a lack of experimental research to investigate SSR as a classroom procedure implemented by secondary school English teachers who have no particular expertise in the teaching of reading. Specifically this study attempted to answer two research questions:

1) What is the effect of SSR on the reading comprehension skills of urban secondary school students?

2) What is the effect of SSR on the attitude toward reading of urban secondary school students?

In attempting to answer these two questions the data was analysed to determine possible relationships between the dependent variables of reading comprehension and attitude toward reading and the independent variables of reading ability, grade level and treatment as well as the possibility of interactions between the independent variables as they relate to the dependent variables.

METHOD

Subjects

This study was conducted in New Haven, Connecticut. With a population of 137,707 New Haven is the third largest city in the state. It is both a manufacturing and commercial center for a wide geographic area. James Hillhouse High School, the site of this study, has an enrollment of approximately 1,300 students of whom 91.6 percent are Black and three percent are Spanish American. To be sure that Hillhouse High School students were representative of all the secondary school students in New Haven, scores on the eighth grade city wide testing program in Reading were compared to see if students who were subsequently assigned to Hillhouse High School achieved any differently on the test than students subsequently assigned to the other two high schools in the city. The results of the test were not significant at the .05 level.

All 14 English teachers and their 61 English classes participated in this research project. The three male teachers and 11 female teachers ranged in age from 23 to 58. The medial age was 32.8. Eight of the teachers had B.A. degrees, five had M.A. degrees, and one had a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study. They ranged in teaching experience from a beginning teacher to a veteran of 31 years with the median

number of years experience being 7.9.

Materials

Two instruments were used to study the effects of the treatments. A student's attitude toward reading was measured by the Student Views on Reading attitude inventory (Kennedy & Halinski, 1975). Reading comprehension was measured by Form F of the Advanced Level Reading Test of the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 1970 edition.

A nonequivalent control group was used in the study. Teachers were randomly assigned to groups and the groups were then randomly assigned to treatments.

Prior to the implementation of the experimental treatment identified as SSR, all of the students were tested by their English teachers in their English classes to determine their pre-experiment reading achievement and attitude toward reading.

The experimental treatment identified as SSR in this study consisted of four days a week of traditional classroom procedures and one day a week of SSR. The control treatment consisted of five days a week of traditional classroom procedures that did not include any SSR.

The study lasted five and one half months from the third week in September to the second week in February. Each experimental classroom was exposed to 20 class periods of SSR. In terms of the school's instructional program, the study spanned two and a half marking periods.

At the end of the experiment, the students were again tested by their English teachers in their English classes to determine their post experiment reading achievement and attitude toward reading.

RESULTS

Because this study was concerned with determining possible rela-

tionships between the dependent variables of reading comprehension and attitude toward reading and the independent variables of reading ability, grade level and treatment, as well as the possibility of interactions between the independent variables as they relate to the dependent variables, a multiple regression design was used (Kerlinger, 1973). Data was interpreted by least squares analysis of variance, forward solution of incremental validity. Means, adjusted means, and standard deviations were calculated for the reading comprehension test scores and the attitude toward reading scores. All eight research hypotheses generated from the research questions were tested for significance at the .05 level. Interpretation of the data yielded these findings.

1) Statistical analysis of the data revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between treatment and reading comprehension.

2) Statistical analysis of the data revealed that there was no statistically significant relationship between treatment and attitude toward reading.

3) When the interaction between a student's reading ability and the treatment group to which he/she had been exposed was statistically analysed to determine a possible relationship between this interaction and the student's reading comprehension, no significant F value was generated.

4) Analysis revealed that when the interaction between a student's reading ability and the treatment group to which he/she had been exposed was examined to determine a possible relationship between this interaction and a student's attitude toward reading, no significant F value was generated.

5) Statistical analysis revealed that when the interaction between a student's grade level and the treatment group to which he/she had been exposed was examined to determine a possible relationship between this interaction and a student's reading comprehension, no significant F value was generated.

6) Statistical analysis revealed that when the interaction between a student's grade level and the treatment group to which he/she had been exposed was examined to determine a possible relationship between this interaction and a student's attitude toward reading, no significant F value was generated.

7) When all three independent variables, grade level, reading ability and treatment were considered, no statistically significant interaction was found in terms of a student's reading comprehension.

8) When these same variables were examined in terms of their interaction to each other and their relationship to how students felt about reading, the same results were found.

Because the F values were not statistically significant at the .05 level, all eight null hypotheses generated from the research questions were accepted.

DISCUSSION

Limitations

This research study has certain limitations that somewhat restrict the assumptions that can be made from the findings.

1) The control treatment group was in essence not a specific classroom procedure but rather the lack of a specific procedure. The comparison was really not between two classroom procedures but between SSR and a lack of SSR. If the control treatment had been a specific

classroom procedure, the findings might have had greater instructional implications.

2) The research design of this study provided that teachers would make use of one or the other of the treatment groups. Therefore, in order to cancel out the possible effect that the teacher had on the treatment, the n of the study was reduced from the number of classrooms to the number of teachers. If the design had made provisions for the possibility of cancelling out the teacher effect, the larger n of the classrooms rather than the smaller n of the teachers might have made more subtle relationships and interactions more apparent.

Conclusions

Despite the limitations of the study and the fact that no significant F values were generated, several valid conclusions can still be made about the effectiveness and practicality of SSR as an instructional procedure.

1) Students from both high and low reading ability levels in grades nine through twelve who were allowed to spend time in class reading printed material that they wanted to read with little or no teacher interaction and with no accountability for what they read, achieved as well in terms of how well they understood print as students who were not allowed to read in school under these conditions. By allowing students of varying reading ability levels in grades nine through twelve to sit in class and read materials of their own choosing without checking up on what they read, we did not retard their reading achievement.

2) Students from both high and low reading ability levels in grades nine through twelve who spent one out of every five days a week

reading materials of their own choosing without any accountability for what they read, did not feel any less positive about reading than those students who were never required to spend time in school reading for sustained periods of time. Students who were required to read for long periods of time in school did not develop any less positive feelings toward reading than students who were never required to read for long periods of time in school.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

Urban schools are currently faced with dwindling budgets and increased cries for instructional accountability. The findings and conclusions resulting from an analysis of the data collected during this study could have important implications for those school personnel who are charged with the responsibility of finding theoretically sound instructional procedures that can be easily translated into practice in today's urban secondary schools.

1) SSR is an instructional procedure that requires no special equipment or materials to implement. It does not neccesitate the purchasing of additional materials or the budgeting of additional funds. It can be put into practice by making use of existing materials.

2) SSR is an uncomplicated procedure that can be used by teachers of varying levels of training and/or teaching expertise. It can be implemented easily without the necessity of retraining existing personnel.

3) SSR allows students to practice lifetime reading skills. Since the student establishes his/her own purposes for reading and chooses the materials to be read, the student practices the skills that are necessary to become an active, voluntary reader. Students are given

the opportunity during SSR to decide what they want to read and why they want to read it. Classroom procedures that do not allow students to read for their own purposes in materials of their own choosing, ignore these important lifetime reading skills.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Goodman, Y. & Burke, C. Reading miscue inventory manual; procedure for diagnosis and evaluation. New York: McMillan, 1972.

Hofmann, R.V. Reading for all. Phi Delta Kappan, 1978, 60(4), 315.

Hunt, L. Updating the individual approach to reading: IRI or IPR? (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 044 244)

Hunt, L. & Villemarie, R. Notes from a summer reading laboratory school. Wilson Library Bulletin, 1973, 47, 684-86.

Johnson, S. A Survey of reading habits: theme 4, literature. (Report No. R-02-6-C4) Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics (DHEW/OE), May, 1973.

Kennedy, L. & Halinski, J. Measuring attitudes: an extra dimension. Journal of Reading, 1975, 18, 518-22.

Kerlinger, F.N. Foundations of behavioral research. New Yo.k: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.

McCracken, R. Initiating sustained silent reading. Journal of Reading, 1971, 14, 521-24, 582-83.

Oliver, M. High intensity practice: the right to enjoy reading. Education, 1970, 91, 69-71.

Petre, R. Reading breaks make it in the classroom. Journal of Reading, 1971, 15, 191-98.

Vacca, R. & Johns, J. $R=S_1+S_2+S_3.....S_n$. Reading Horizons, 1976, 17, 9-13.